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DE-STRESSED, MORE PRODUCTIVE AND LEGALLY MINDFUL: A SAM STORY

by Gary Powell

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Gary Powell is an attorney in Cincinnati, Ohio. For the first twenty-three years of his career, he was in a small litigation-oriented law firm where he focused mainly on land use, zoning and development areas. He was involved in a number of cases involving different areas of constitutional law, including eminent domain, freedom of speech and association, due process, and equal protection. Gary taught various law-related classes to undergraduate and graduate students as an Assistant Adjunct Professor at the University of Cincinnati from 1986 through 2011. In 2011, Gary became General Counsel for a natural-based chemical company in Cincinnati. Gary has served as President of the Cincinnati Bar Foundation and as a Trustee for the Cincinnati Bar Association. He is a Fellow of the American Bar Foundation and the Ohio State Bar Foundation, and has been a Member of the Hamilton County (Ohio) Mental Health & Recovery Services Board since 2005. In January 2011, Gary attended the Monroe Institute's Outreach Facilitator Training Program. During that program, he was able to spend considerable time with former Monroe President, Carol Sabick de la Herran, discussing his desire to bring the tools he had learned from the various Monroe programs and his own meditation practice to attorneys. In the intervening years, Gary has become especially fond of Monroe's SAM™ Technology, and attended the "Conscious Presence" program in 2013 and the "Event Horizon" program in 2017. Gary is introducing his own SAM-based meditation exercises for attorneys under the trade name, Legally Mindful™. legallymindful.com/ Gary is co-leader of the TMI Local Chapter in Cincinnati, Ohio with Andrea Berger.

My older sister Kathy was diagnosed with breast cancer in 1998. She fought that battle and won. She passed the five-year mark of being cancer-free around 2004. It was great seeing Kathy with a new lease on life. While she always had an upbeat, optimistic view, after passing the five-year mark, her spirits seemed to soar again.

Unfortunately, her cancer wasn't done with her. It came back with a vengeance in 2005, and Kathy transitioned on April 20, 2008. Through the end, she showed terrific courage and strength and taught me a lot about maintaining class and dignity through strife.

Kathy's death in April 2008 was the fourth death of a close relative during the previous 18 months. They all experienced a different type of death, from my father, who lived five months after a debilitating stroke, which took his ability to speak, to my father-in-law, who passed quickly from a heart attack to a wonderful aunt who passed gracefully on her own terms after a

long battle with heart issues. Seeing close relatives die in different ways and at different ages, I really started to contemplate issues relating to life and death, and other “big” questions.

In order to try and find answers to some of these questions, I decided to attend a weeklong workshop at the Monroe Institute in the beautiful mountains of Virginia. I had tried traditional meditation methods before, but I did not stick with them for long. I read about the sound-assisted technology Monroe had been using in their meditation exercises since the 1970s, and that intrigued me. Meditation backed up by technology—talk about a non-traditional, but apparently effective, approach to meditation!

So, without knowing much more about Monroe, I headed off to the mountains of Virginia in July 2008 for my “Gateway Voyage,” the introductory workshop. Over the course of the week, I was able to get into deeper meditation states than I ever experienced before, and, as a result, I was able to experience a very stress-free, clear-minded existence that whole week. Better yet, I was able to get back to that relatively relaxed state very easily when I returned home, and I was told by numerous people, including my kids, that they saw a noticeable difference in me. I was a calmer, more patient person than before I went to Virginia.

Unlike traditional meditation approaches, where you passively observe your breath and allow thoughts to pass through your mind without judgment, these exercises were guided and were designed for you to be mentally “active.” In other words, you get the experience of taking questions or issues you want to work on into your meditation.

This proved to be a great avenue for self-exploration. I didn’t notice it until I got home, but I seemed to be more at peace with myself, and better able to let things go, especially those things I couldn’t control. This proved very helpful to me in some of the work and personal issues I had been facing.

The next summer, I returned to Monroe for the “Heartline” program. My intention was to learn how to really open up the heart of this left-brained, analytical attorney. During the week, I again had a series of very impactful experiences and got my first real taste of what it means to live from my heart space.

A lot of personal development took place that week. I really experienced how it felt to have coherence between my mind and my heart and how I could, with practice, return to that coherent state just by having the intention to do so. That feeling of coherence seemed to start balancing out the omnipresent analytical side of me with a more creative openness that I too often had difficulty expressing. By tapping into my heart energy, I was better able to see things from a wider perspective, listen more patiently, and I really noticed the increased degree of compassion I was able to hold for others.

As I grew more confident in the impact my heart energy had on my own life, I decided to conduct an experiment to see if I could use it to impact others. On occasion, while traveling in an elevator to my 19th floor office, I sent out my heart energy to the other passengers. As I concentrated on sending that energy to each individual, I noticed that I received more smiles and positive interactions from the other people in response.

This was perhaps my first inkling that I could not only effectively reach out to others and affect them positively, but that it was also in my nature to do this—to teach others what I learned in hopes that meditation would transform their lives as much as it had mine.

I continued going back to Monroe on an annual basis and eventually became an Outreach Trainer so I could give workshops at home. I also decided that I wanted to figure out how to share some of the tools I'd learned with other lawyers to help them bring more peace and happiness into their lives. It was interesting, but probably shouldn't have been surprising, that the more I thought about making sound-assisted meditation tools accessible to other lawyers, the more my meditation experiences reflected that theme.

For example, during the “Conscious Presence” program in 2013, we did an exercise where the object was to explore a place of unlimited potential, and to see what we found there. As I wrote in my journal after this exercise, in the midst of a very awe-inspiring experience of exploring this place, “I was then brought ‘back’ and understood that I am a Teacher, not an Explorer, and that my focus should be on the infinite possibilities here in the Earth Locale. There is no less ‘infinity’ here than there is ‘out there.’ Infinity is, among other things, a matter of perspective. What some see as the boundless, almost empty nothingness, others see as the boundless fullness of the human spirit in this existence. I am supposed to do my part to help others find this in themselves.”

This revelation made me more determined than ever to somehow fulfill this mission. I had already experienced how the active-mind approach found in sound-assisted exercises worked from a spiritual and self-awareness angle, and now I wanted to extend it to my working life.

Since I was now able to bring an intention into a meditation in order to work on an issue, I began using this method in relation to my work as an attorney. I found this practice to really help my creativity in my work, as well as give me more confidence in my ability to find workable solutions to very complex problems.

I had also felt the tremendous effect meditation had on reducing the stress in my life, or at least the way I was able to deal with it. I knew that if I was stressed, I could bring myself back to center with a single deep cleansing breath, even if I was in a courtroom or a stressful meeting. I also knew I was a happier and more effective attorney. If it worked for me, I was confident it could work for others.

That dream and a lot of work led to my launching Legally Mindful and to developing the Legally Mindful app. The app includes very specific meditation exercises I've developed using the Monroe Institute's own Spatial Angle Modulation™ (SAM) sound technology to help lead users into deep meditative states where they can address many of the issues attorneys and other people face in their professional and personal lives.

The exercises explore everything from stress relief to practicing compassion and gratitude. Then, Legally Mindful takes it a few steps further than traditional meditation practices. For example, in the Creative Space exercise, users can examine work-related issues and creatively develop possible resolutions. In the Meeting Room exercise, they visualize an upcoming meeting, presentation or other event to increase their confidence when the real thing occurs. The Health & Well Being exercise guides listeners to use their own heart-based energy to release any pain and discomfort in the body.

In response to the pandemic, Legally Mindful introduced a free sound-assisted meditation exercise called Immune Response through the website. It is designed to help anyone improve their immune system and to cope with feelings of anxiety during these uncertain times.

The meditation utilizes a heart-energy approach I started implementing after my "Heartline" experience in 2009. The focus of this heart-based approach is on developing the mind-body connection in order to improve overall health and well-being while optimizing the immune system's response to viruses, bacteria and other germs that enter your body. The exercise is supported by the SAM sound technology.

On the tenth anniversary of my sister Kathy's death, I launched the Legally Mindful website with a dedication to Kathy and with hope that my venture in bringing sound-assisted meditation to others would be successful. And I know it will be.

One of the things I learned through the Monroe Institute programs is that our own limiting expectations can control what we get out of any experience. I learned how that worked as I explored my own consciousness, when I really opened my mind and heart to wonderful things happening in my life.

Legally Mindful is my way of raising the expectation that anyone can go into a deep meditative state and be intentionally productive with work-related endeavors. I know how well these expanded expectations have worked for me. By telling my story, my intent is to help others to have similar, and hopefully even more productive, experiences themselves.